

The Normative and Dynamic Dimensions of Children's Mind

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines looks at the developmental concepts such as the normative and the dynamic dimensions that Katz talked about in her book (Engaging Children's Minds), and its' contribution towards the development of children. It points to the different varieties of behavior that children engage in within their different cultures. It presented problems that the ESL teacher faces when she has to create a lesson plan to teach ESL children. A new syllabus was designed to help the ESL teacher counter these problems and a sample lesson plan was given.

Children's Mind

Early childhood education has traditionally drawn heavily upon studies of human development. As academic specialties, child study and child development have contributed greatly to the field (Greenberg 1997). The study of child development in particular is typically a major component of early childhood teacher preparation. The concept of development have two dimension: the normative and the dynamic. Each of those dimensions has its own implication for education. P17.

Normative dimension addresses matters such as what most children can and cannot do at a given age. What is typical and most frequently observed in children at a particular age is considered normative. For example a child's first step or first words

at a given age. When an activity is developmentally appropriate, speak of grade level achievement, or apply Gesell-type developmental measures, we are employing the normative dimension of the concept of development. p18.

Another developmental concept is dynamic dimension. This dimension has three interrelated aspects.

1. The way human beings change over time with experience: addresses the sequence of learning, transformation from one stage to another due to age, and the order in which stage developmental processes occurs.
2. The second aspect is called the delayed impact. How earlier experiences affects later functioning, especially the personality aspect.
3. The third aspect of dynamic dimension is the long term cumulative effect of repeated or frequent experiences.

These three aspects of the dynamic dimension reminds us of children's early experiences in light of their potential long-term consequences. (Katz & Chard p18).when taken these three dimension into consideration, children should not be given a task just because they want to do it, but rather if it is age appropriate and correspond with their developmental level. Teacher should be aware of these distinctions when planning activities and projects for their classes, according to Katz. The long-term accumulative effect is what concerns many educators, especially the child from another culture.

Within and across cultures some young children can engage in a wide variety of behaviors. In some part of the world children assume heavy responsibility for their siblings, while others help to earn an income to supplement their family budget. Some toddlers are taught to read flash cards. Preschool children can perform rote counting up to the hundreds for rewards, such as a stickers. However, just because they do so,

does not necessarily imply that they should. The long-term accumulative effect might be damaging because the lack of readiness to grasp a particular concept is not there.

Katz & Chard p19.

When an educator designs a curriculum for young children this should include what knowledge the child should acquire. One basis upon which to make decisions is what the adults in the children's culture believe is important for them to know. Another basis is our understanding of how children's knowledge develops and what they can understand as development proceeds. (Spodeck, 1987 cited by Katz).

Recent insight to the nature of development and learning in early education process reaffirm the idea that young children are intensely engaged in the quest for understanding their experiences. Although different processes are involved, to generally agree that the disposition to make sense of experience is powerful in a young child.

(W.A.L. Blyth, 1984 cited by Katz).

A child from another culture might find the task of dimensions and learning even more challenging because of language proficiency in English. A major responsibility of parents and teachers is to help these children make fuller, deeper, and more accurate sense of their experiences. Therefore an English as a second language teacher have a greater task of designing an efficient and effective curriculum for children who speak English as a second language.

In my first KAM an interview was done with the ESL teacher at Fairfax County School district in Centreville, Virginia (Brookdale Elementary). The population of children represent a variety of cultures and reflect a wide range of educational and language experiences. Many were born in another country and speak another language than English. Some were born in the United States but have a different home

language. A few come to Fairfax County Public Schools with little or no previous school experience.

The problems that the ESL teacher presented resulted in designing a multicultural syllabus as a guideline for ESL teachers to create lessons plans to facilitate the ESL child.

Close consideration was given to the different developmental stages that Erickson, Gesell, Bruner and Piaget talked about in the developmental stages of children.

Reference

Design Multicultural Syllabus

Katz, L. & Chard, S.C. (1995). P17-21. Engaging Children's Mind. Research and Principle of practice. Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, N.J.